

In View of God's Mercy - week 16

Romans 15:14-16:27

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In August, we began a journey through the book of Romans, concluding today after 16 weeks.

On that day, Matt laid out a clear goal:

- in an effort to grow together in Christ and promote theological unity among this congregation, we are looking at the book of Romans together, on Sundays in worship and in each of our community groups so that as we look to Jesus, we are doing so with a shared perspective.
- Each week, we have asked the question, **in view of God's mercy – what does our whole-life response to Jesus look like?**

For 11 chapters, Paul clearly communicates the hope and heart of his gospel that he has received from the Spirit, clearly revealing our need for a savior and the supremacy of Jesus to save a particular people, set apart, for himself.

Then in Chapter 12, Paul pivots toward our response - our whole life response:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers,¹ by the mercies of God, ^ato present your bodies ^bas a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship (12:1).

The NIV - "In View of God's mercy..." offer your bodies, your very lives...

- Because of all that God has accomplished, your response matters.
- Because He is worthy of it, offer him your entire life, to use you as He sees fit.

For the **last several weeks**, Matt has faithfully led us through some tumultuous waters - clearly delineating that which is **essential** (salvation is from Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone), what matters are **important** that we should fight for, and which matters that the Christian faces that should **not bring division**.

(please go back and listen if you've missed the last few weeks).

- He ended last week with this:
 - **Instead of passing judgment along to each other (about disputable matters), let us pass on words of encouragement and lives of mutual joy in Jesus and one another. Let us hold firmly to the essentials of our faith and pursue unity with one another. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. The goal is living in harmony for the glory of God.**

In view of God's mercy, are you living in harmony for the Glory of God?

Today, we will close our time in Romans together as Paul pivots away from strictly teaching toward a needed reminder and of where/how the letter began and what his hopes are for the future.

Romans 15:14-21 - confidence in the Spirit

- Paul is confident that the Spirit of God is working among the Roman church.
- He is proud only in that which the Spirit has done through him.
 - And even that was oriented not toward himself but toward the response by faith of obedience to Christ among the Gentiles.
- And so he eagerly desires to continue preaching the Gospel to those who have not yet heard.

Romans 15:22-32

- Hindered by the Spirit - not for lack of desire but because of very real calling and the Sovereignty of God over Paul's life/ministry to continue working where the Gospel had not yet reached. (Rome was reached!)
- Tells of his plans to travel first to Jerusalem to take an offering from the churches there back to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem, then to go to Spain by way of Rome.
- "They were pleased and indeed they owe it to them..."
 - This idea simply put - the Gentiles have reaped the spiritual blessing that came from the Jews, might they then out of joy respond with material blessing?

V.32

- Paul desperately asks for their prayers → for safety while in Judea
- Then reminds them that his plans are housed in one simple truth: **so that by God's will i may come to you with joy...**
- As someone who lives with every modern convenience imaginable, making plans on a daily basis that are submitted, surrendered, and entrusted to the will of God is not normal.

- But perhaps we should.
- What kind of joy and hope for eternity would we walk in if every day everything was grounded in trusting the will of God?
 - Mind you, God's not asking for permission here.
 - This is an exercise in surrender and trust of the one who has numbered what's left of the hairs on your head and counted the total number of days.

- Paul then blesses them, that the God of peace would make his presence known and felt among them.

Romans 16:1-16

- Don't get lost in the names and miss the wonder of this section.
- Not only is this diverse group of brothers and sisters a mix of Jewish and Gentile saints,
- 5 of the 26 were likely slaves (based on their names¹) while Aristobulus was likely the grandson of Herod the Great and Narcissus was a well known, well-to-do influencer of Emperor Claudius.
- 9 of the 26 were women - all of those named held a special place in the life, ministry of Paul and the spread of the gospel.
- Paul makes no indication that slaves gathered separately from freedmen or that women worshiped in cloistered spaces.

¹ This section pulled from data found in *Romans* by John Stott from the Bible Speaks Today commentary series (p. 401)

- Over and over again he commends all of those named as faithful, committed, hard working brothers and sisters as beloved friends, chosen by God as fellow workers, and fellow sufferers for the name of Jesus.
- Each with a special place in Paul's heart.

What I gather here:

- **Community Matters**
 - When life is hard, and it will be, your being united to a Christian church matters.
 - According to Paul, there is no such thing as a private Christian.
 - As Dane Ortlund puts it: a private christian is a nonsensical idea².
 - So if you find yourself asking, “Man, why do these folks make such a big deal about church membership?” → now you know.
 - We need one another.

Romans 16:17-24

- Almost like, “oh yea, and one more thing...”
- A final warning was needed for those in Rome who are known by their obedience by all, rejoiced over by Paul, that they would be “wise to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.” (v.19).
 - How I would love for that to be the one thing my kids leave my home with.
 - Fully alive in Christ, “wise to what is Good and innocent to what is evil”
- He tells them to have nothing to do with:
 - Divisive people (pot stirrers as my wife likes to say)
 - Those creating rules/obstacles contrary to the freedom we have just worked through (last few weeks).
 - Those who serve their own appetites - and there are many appetites that rule our day...
 - Those who deceive with smooth talk and flattery, especially preying on those immature in the faith.
- The promise, then is sure:
 - Soon... “the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” (v.20).

As Paul so famously does, ending his letter he draws the listeners and the readers heavenward through a doxology of praise.

The church then, and the church know, needs these easily memorable texts to orient our hearts and minds and souls around this truth:

God is on his throne.

He has defeated sin in Christ.

He has called a people to himself.

² Ortlund, Dane. *Deeper*.

And one day Christ will return.

Doxology literally in GRK means "saying praise."

What is true is that God has glory and is glorious.

What is ours to do then is to declare that that is true.

Would we his people speak of his glory.

Would we, as David wrote, 'ascribe to the Lord, the glory due his name?' (ps 29:2).

In view of God's Mercy, let us end with our eyes/hearts on Christ.

With hearts full of faith and our eyes set on the King of Kings, let this be true in our lives as it is certainly true in his.